

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for January 12, 2000

Agenda Items

- Concept Design Briefing on the Maintenance Base Facility
- Schematic Design Briefing on Royal Brougham and Lander Stations

Commissioners Present

Jon Layzer, Chair
Matthew Kitchen
Jay Lazerwitz
Rick Sundberg
Paul Tomita

Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
Marty Curry, Planning Commission
Cheryl Sizov, LRRP

The meeting opened with introductions and a review of the agenda. Meeting notes from November 10, 1999 were reviewed and approved as written. The Panel briefly discussed its upcoming meeting schedule and agenda items, after which Debora updated the Panel on Sound Transit's schedule and other news, including:

- Beacon Hill design work will be limited in that the station will not be built out during Phase I
- Design work will continue on Royal Brougham and Graham, even though these are listed as deferred stations in the LPA
- Sound Transit has received its Record of Decision from the FTA, which concludes the environmental review process—now awaiting authorization to proceed with final design
- Design/build RFP for the tunnel stations has been published
- The Rainier Brewery site has been selected for the maintenance base
- Sound Transit will change civil engineers at 30% design
- Decision on Northgate still pending; hope to know this spring whether to proceed to 30% design
- Outside Seattle, the Tacoma line is in final design now; Boeing Access Road will go forward without a park n ride lot, SeaTac work is also starting

Jon Layzer asked whether Sound Transit is expecting design continuity between the Tacoma and Seattle lines, and whether some elements of Tacoma's design might be "grafted" onto Seattle Central Link. Debora stated that some elements—signage, fare vending—might be the same between systems, while others will not (such as the Overhead Catenary System).

Jon expressed a desire to make some comments about where we are in the process before proceeding with the presentations. The first phases of design review—scoping and concept design—have gone well. The Panel's review is very important to the work that will be done in these next phases of design, including permit review and City Council review. He said he would like to use a similar system as the Design Commission whereby the review includes some specific direction to the client about elements that need to be further refined. Therefore he proposed using the last 5 to 10 minutes of each briefing to frame a formal action from the Panel. Cheryl added that she will provide summaries of past LRRP comments on each station, to refresh Commissioners' memories about previous issues and concerns.

Concept Design Briefing on the Sound Transit Maintenance Base Facility

Mike Merrick, Sound Transit

In November 1999 the Sound Transit Board selected the Link alignment along with a site for the Maintenance Base Facility. The site chosen is the former Rainier Brewery location. We have been working on a concept design since then, moving toward 30% design later this spring and 60% in September. The final design is slated for March 2001, with construction approximately May 2002. We have delayed the schedule a little to allow the present user of the property to find another location. Key elements of the design include:

- A shop facility on the west side of the site, 3-4 stories for equipment repair and offices, staff training rooms, cafeteria and roof garden, and car maintenance bays for weekly and monthly work
- Storage tracks on the east side of the site for 96 cars, along with a smaller maintenance facility
- Operations control center housing maintenance and operations staff—this is the “nerve center” of the Link system

The facility will be adjacent to the main line which is elevated at this location. Low floor train cars means that equipment is mounted on the roof of each car, and maintenance bays will have pits and above-ground walkways for full access to all sides of the cars. One critical piece of equipment is the wheel-truing machine which helps guard against noise from the wheels and also increases train efficiency. The shop building will be somewhat visible from I-5. There will be a parking area with a ramp up to the lobby and reception area—this may be a good location for public art, as there is a three story opening there.

Discussion

- How many staff will be at the site? *(200-300 people over the course of several workshifts. ZGF is the architect for the project.)*
- Will we see the project at 30%? *(30% is mostly civil engineering work which you may or may not be interested in.)* We'd rather see it early than late.
- What about art and artists' involvement? *(Tad Savinar is just beginning the project now.)*
- The interior isn't a priority, unless you acknowledge the public tours that may take place there.
- We'll want to review the three streets that are being proposed for vacation, as well as what public purpose is served by closing them.

No formal action was taken.

Schematic Design Briefing on Royal Brougham and Lander Stations

Greg Hill, Streeter and Associates

Norie Sato, STart

The three projects we were coordinating with earlier are now on hold, but we'll continue to monitor them. At the Royal Brougham station, there will be low volume during the week, but high volumes at game times. The challenge will be to move people down the platform in order to get every car loaded. The canopy has a central spine with side canopies giving people places to walk under cover. The station has a 12' wide, center platform with a central “spine” canopy and side canopies off that. There is also a 10' wide bike trail on the east side of the corridor, up against existing buildings. Lander is a side platform station with canopies that are both covered (30%) and uncovered (70%) due to cost considerations. The canopies consist of a tapered column with a cross arm and glazed panels—moving from heavier to lighter forms from the ground up. We expect better regular volumes at Lander from workers in the area and bus

transfers. Even though we will complete design for the Royal Brougham station, construction is being deferred.

There are no trees planned for the platform itself because of concerns Sound Transit has about leaves on the tracks. However, we are planning for landscaping along the trail and other locations. There will be a single layered mixed evergreen and deciduous planting of trees, shrubs, and groundcover along the east side of the trail for approximately one mile. There is more land to work with at Lander than at Royal Brougham. The objectives being met through landscaping include:

- Meeting Sound Transit goals for system identity
- Creating a comfortable environment for users
- Attracting people from the street to the station
- Complementing existing landscaping in the area around industrial/corporate office buildings
- Responding to the character of the corridor with its vanishing point perspective and the linear murals

Station entrances are being treated differently than waiting areas and we'd like your feedback on that. We are using a "cal wall" (a sandwich of synthetic material over an aluminum grid) for the windscreens with a solid center panel and translucent side panels. Of the three concepts presented last time, we are pursuing the "contrast" theme with elements of the "metamorphosis" theme. There will be bike storage at the signal/communications building. At Royal Brougham, loading will occur from the sidewalk crossing the busway to the platform—later the SR 519 pedestrian bridge will change circulation. We'll have curb bulbs at Lander to narrow the intersection, and a signal arm.

Discussion

- Why leave the canopies off, and why 50% at Lander and 30% at Royal Brougham? *(Mostly due to cost concerns, but also based on peak hour volumes and how many people we need to provide cover for.)*
- I prefer to see exploration of the shelters as an inspiration for the entrance, moving from heavy to light there as well—using different elements, but the same strategy.
- I'm interested in how to humanize the environment while still keeping the industrial "language."
- With respect to art, how do we create interest at the end of the platform to get people moving down the length of it? We'll also need to keep things calm/quiet at Royal Brougham.
- If you want people to move along the platform, remove a portion of the canopy!
- Finding the platform from a distance will also be an issue.
- I'm not supportive of flipping or rotating the canopy as described.
- This is an issue of scale and or changing elevation at the entry. The canopies seem well-developed; now the issue is how the entry is different from the rest of the platforms and how to find them from a distance. Lighting needs to play a role in this too.
- Can't you design double-end loaded platforms so you don't have the problem of moving people down the platform from just one end? *(Maybe later at Lander, but not at Royal Brougham. The biggest pulse load at Royal Brougham will be right after a game..)*
- Will there be any pedestrian improvements before the SR 519 pedestrian bridge is completed? *(We will change the pavement markings.)*
- What is the strategy for improving the safety of the intersections? *(We are still resolving this, but looking at creating different colors of concrete, textures, etc.)*
- Alaskan Way is a very poor example of where this has been done—don't follow that lead!
- Is there a possibility that vehicles may drive over the pedestrian path? *(No vehicles other than buses are allowed on the busway.)*

- Are the art concepts we saw last time for these stations moving forward? *(We are waiting until 30% is complete to determine what concepts to pursue and to identify specific art opportunities. This is the approach for all stations. Nonetheless, the artists have already influenced the overall design of the stations.)*
- Sound Transit has done a good job getting artists on-board, so we don't want to see you lose momentum.
- How do you plan to delineate the general entry area from the fare enforcement zone? *(We have discussed this with the decision that fare enforcement will occur on the train itself for at-grade stations; it may be different for tunnel and aerial stations.)*
- If enforcement is on the train, then the entrance structure doesn't need to read differently than the rest of the station; orientation yes, but not to separate paying/non-paying people.
- I like seeing the different treatment! Are there enough vending machines at Royal Brougham? What about seating? *(Yes. We also have windbreaks there.)*
- How wide is the trail and the landscaping? *(The trail is 10' wide with 4'-5' of landscaping next to it. We used the Myrtle Edwards trail as a model—it is 8' wide.)*
- Are there building entrances onto the trail? *(Only a few left, and they mostly serve as emergency exits. We're using the trail as a transition element to resolve the grade difference. There will be a 2 ½' wall between the trail and the guideway, with the trail lower—on average—than the guideway. Artists see the fences at Royal Brougham as art opportunities.)*
- Where is the signal/communication building? *(Near Lander, up against property Sound Transit will need to buy.)*
- What about TPSS? Can these be used as opportunities for artwork? *(There are no TPSS structures planned here. There'll be another signal/communications building south of Royal Brougham and two emergency ramps. Sound Transit initially thought of these as being identical throughout the system, but they could be individualized.)*
- If you have to prioritize, then an unadorned box here is less visible than along MLK. (The north façade at Royal Brougham is the only really visible one. We'll planning on using evergreen trees near intersections to mark the location of the stations.)
- How will the spacing of the trees relate to the speed of the train? *(We are creating a rhythm and movement based on tree spacing as read from the train.)*
- The rhythm isn't quite there yet, but I like the idea.
- I also like it and want to see landscaping on the platforms as a humanizing element. Landscape is one of the continuous identifying elements of the whole system, and should be well done and durable. Paving is part of this too.
- There seems to be some conflict still between the murals and trees—they interfere with one another.
- I like the verticals but I don't understand the rhythm. Make landscape part of the murals. Think about trellises and espaliering.
- The bike parking is important at Lander. I commend you on recognizing the pattern of landscaping that already exists in this community.
- How enclosed will the pedestrian feel with a double bank of ticketing machines at Royal Brougham? Will it be too much and create a bottleneck? *(It is a 20' by 22' space. We'll be fine most of the time, but will have to have a person on duty during game times to control the flow of the crowd.)*
- If Royal Brougham is deferred, how will these people be served? What percentage will go to Lander? *(There is still bus service, and a longer walk but more trains by going to the International District station.)*
- My only concern is that the Lander canopy design seems overly restrictive.

Jon preferred his remarks by saying that the fundamental decision is whether the design is adequate enough to move forward for refinement at the next phase of design. He then asked for a recommendation to approve the designs presented or not.

Recommendation

The Seattle Light Rail Review Panel unanimously recommends approval of the schematic design as presented for both Royal Brougham and Lander stations.

The Panel commends the consultants for an excellent presentation and good supporting materials, including models and illustrative drawings. The Panel specifically supports the following elements of the design as presented:

- *Street trees on the platform*
- *Bike parking at Lander*

The Panel wishes to see further refinement and articulation of the following elements as design progresses:

- *Platform entrance areas, with the Panel preferring a stronger design statement that can be read from a distance;*
- *Landscaping plan for the stations, approaches to the stations, and alongside the King County murals (addressing rhythm, pattern); including how landscaping will be designed to withstand heavy event crowds at Royal Brougham;*
- *Conceptual ideas regarding lighting—both station-specific lighting and how it contributes to the legibility of the Link system, and also integration with all other forms of lighting including ambient, accent, and background lighting;*
- *Treatment of the existing fences at the Royal Brougham station, especially exploring opportunities to use the fencing creatively as part of the station design and artwork;*
- *Curbs and curb bulbs, with accompanying drawings to better explain the relationship between the sidewalk, tracks, and road, and the interaction with pedestrians and vehicles;*
- *Design of the transition structure where the tracks go from at-grade to aerial near the maintenance facility.*
- *Signal/Communication and Transit Power Substations along the alignment; and*
- *Examination of how a variety of streetscape elements including windbreaks, benches, railings, and art will bring a "human scale" aspect to the stations, and how these elements will be integrated into the overall station without presenting a cluttered appearance.*

Jon noted that Councilmember Nicastro would be joining the Design Commission next week, and that he would share information with her about light rail, speaking on behalf of the LRRP. The meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm.